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The Director of Central Intelligence
Washington, D.C. 20505

National Intelligence Council

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MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

THROUGH: John Bird
National Intelligence Officer for Warning

FROM: Fritz W. Ermarth
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SUBJECT: Monthly Forecast and Warning Report -- USSR

1. The Soviet Dilemma in Afghanistan:

A. Discussion

After five years in Afghanistan the Soviets have made little progress against the insurgents, and the Babrak Karmal regime remains as dependent as ever on the continued Soviet military presence. The urban security situation -- particularly in Kabul -- is not better and may be worse. Soviet and Afghan officers, East European diplomats, and others acknowledge all this and more: we have steady reports of Soviet military morale problems in Afghanistan; alcoholism and the use of hashish by Soviet soldiers are common; and there appears to be some civilian grumbling in the USSR. While the Soviet military in Afghanistan once put its best foot forward in reporting to Moscow, the problems of the enterprise are now well known and regularly reported.

Analysts agree that no negotiated agreement is in sight, Soviet military withdrawal is virtually out of the question, and that for logistical reasons alone the Soviets remain unlikely to escalate their military presence to the 200,000-300,000 level minimally required for more rapid progress. Rather the Soviets are thought likely to be relying on a favorable outcome in the long term and, meanwhile, focussing on:

- o Improving the capabilities and mix of their forces in Afghanistan at roughly present levels.

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- o Pacification and cooptation of selected rural areas.
- o Sovietization and cadre development (by bringing Afghan children to the USSR for long periods, etc.).

Analysts anticipate the deployment of a greater number of internal security troops and possibly the introduction of an internal passport system (although one doubts how it could work amidst so much disorder). The Soviets are thought unlikely to escalate their troop deployments by more than 30 percent in the near future, however. Nor does the Community believe the Soviets will seriously threaten to invade Pakistan in the near term, because of the very large military commitment it would require, accompanying logistical problems, and multifold international complications.

There nevertheless is disagreement about whether the Soviets will let things ride as they are and depend on marginal initiatives indefinitely or take some dramatic escalatory or other new action in the future. NIO/USSR and the SOVA analyst believe new Soviet leaders might be more inclined to adopt a different policy course than current leaders, who presumably have more invested in the present Soviet strategy. The Soviets have the physical and manpower resources to continue the present commitment indefinitely. But it is open question whether they can sustain the political/psychological frustrations involved.

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2. Prospects for Sino-Soviet Relations:

A. Discussion

Although the atmospherics of Sino-Soviet relations have recently improved, both sides are less optimistic about the likelihood of significantly improved relations than they were a year ago. The Soviets show no signs of satisfying China's principal concerns -- Soviet broader deployments, engagement in Afghanistan, and support for Vietnam in Kampuchea -- and are beating Beijing over the head on PRC relations with the US and Japan.

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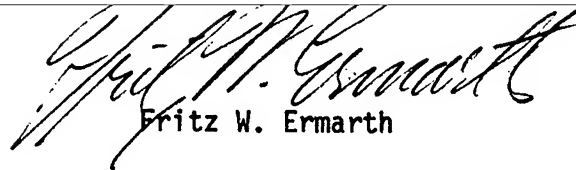
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Beijing nevertheless may be prepared to further expand trade relations and exchanges, and Soviet First Deputy Premier Arkhipov may visit China before the year is out. The occurrence of the visit, and its content, will provide important indications of likely developments in the coming year. Analysts, though, believe the fundamental differences between the two sides will remain intractable. The SOVA and State analysts in fact disagree about whether China is even on the Soviet front burner. The former believes the Soviets merely tend to China, have no expectation that they can significantly improve relations, and consequently do not give strong attention to China in their planning councils.

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